

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANILA 04155 01 OF 02 150841Z

ACTION EA-12

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USIA-06 /066 W

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2948

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 4155

E.O. 11652: X-GDS-1

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: COMELEC COMMISSIONER DISCUSSES ELECTIONS

1. SUMMARY: COMELEC COMMISSIONER VENANCIO YANEZA TOLD EMBOFFS MARCH 14 THAT MARCOS IS DETERMINED THAT APRIL 7 VOTING FOR INTERIM LEGISLATURE WILL BE HONESTLY KOUNTED. YANEZA REPORTEDLY TOLD AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF THAT DETAINED OPPOSITIONIST AQUINO HAS AGREED TO ACT AS MARCOS' LOYAL OPPOSITION LEADER BECAUSE "HE WANTS HIS RELEASE." MARCOS* HE SAID, IS DISTURBED BY BICKERING WITHIN GOVERNMENT'S KBL PARTY AND WILL PROBABLY NOT ALLOW LOCAL ELECTIONS THIS YEAR OR NEXT. YANEZA EXPECTS 25 TO 40 NON-KBL CANDIDATES WILL WIN COUNTRYWIDE, INCLUDING POSSIBLY ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN METRO-MANILA. A PLEBISCITE WILL BE HELD SHORTLY TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW MRS. MARCOS TO BE METRO-MANILA GOVERNOR AND AN IBP MEMBER CONCURRENTLY. HE SAID HE HAD PERSONALLY ASSURED MARCOS THE USG WAS MERELY MONITORING AND NOT MEDDLING IN THE ELECTION. END SUMMARY.

2. COMELEC COMMISSIONER VENANCIO YANEZA WAS IN AN EXPANSIVE MOOD AT DINNER PARTY MARCH 14 (HE BROUGHT FOUR GIRLFRIENDS RATHER THAN HIS WIFE TO EMBOFF'S PARTY). IN CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBOFFS AND OTHERS, YANEZA SAID THAT, SINCE PRESIDENT MARCOS IS NOT PERSONALLY THREATENED IN CURRENT INTERIM BATASANG PAMBANSA (IBP) ELECTION, HE IS DETERMINED TO HAVE AN HONEST

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANILA 04155 01 OF 02 150841Z

COUNTING OF BALLOTS. MARCOS IS PERSONALLY DIRECTING THE KBL CAMPAIGN AND WILL "SPEND PLENTY OF MONEY AND USE ALL AVAILABLE GOVERNMENT RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE KBL." HOWEVER, MARCOS HAS SAID THAT THE BALLOT COUNTING WILL BE CAREFULLY WATCHED AND MUST BE ACCURATE. TOO MANY KNOWLEDGEABLE POLITICIANS, YANEZA SAID, HAVE TOO MUCH AT STAKE AND WILL KNOW THE ACTUAL RESULTS. IF MARCOS OR COMELEC DOCTORS THE RESULTS, THE

POLITICIANS COULD "BRING HIM DOWN." THERE MAY BE SOME MANIPULATION OF RESULTS IN INDIVIDUAL POLLING PLACES, HE SAID, BUT THIS WOULD AMOUNT TO ONLY ONE OR TWO PERCENT OF THE TOTAL.

3. YANEZA REPORTEDLY TOLD AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF AT SAME PARTY THAT DETAINED OPPOSITION LEADER BENIGNO AQUINO IS "WITH US" AND HAS AGREED TO LEAD THE LOYAL OPPOSITION IN THE IBP BECAUSE "HE WANTS HIS RELEASE." (COMMENT: THIS REPORT SHOULD BE VIEWED IN LIGHT OF PERSONAL THEORY OF AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR THAT AQUINO HAS AGREED TO COOPERATE IN THE IBP AND NOT TO SEEK TO REPLACE MARCOS IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS FREEDOM: HENCE HIS MODERATE STANCE ON TV MARCH 11. WE SEE NO EVIDENCE OF SUCH A DEAL. END COMMENT.) HE SAID THAT WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS THERE WILL BE A TELEVISED DEBATE BETWEEN AQUINO AND DEFENSE SECRETARY ENRILE ON THE CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST AQUINO.

4. YANEZA SAID THAT MARCOS IS DISTURBED THAT IN MANY REGIONS THE KBL CAMPAIGN HAS DEGENERATED INTO A POPULARITY CONTEST AMONG THE TOP CANDIDATES AND THEY ARE NOT CAMPAIGNING FOR THE PARTY AS A WHOLE. YANEZA SAID THAT, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, MARCOS IS UNLIKELY TO ALLOW LOCAL ELECTIONS IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS, DESPITE HIS PROMISE TO HOLD THEM LATE IN 1987.

5. YANEZA EXPECTS 25 TO 40 NON-KBL CANDIDATES WILL WIN COUNTRY-WIDE. THE KBL, HE SAID* HOPES TO LIMIT ITS LOSSES TO 15
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MANILA 04155 01 OF 02 150841Z

SEATS. HE SAID THE REGIONS TO WATCH ARE METRO-MANILA, THE BICOL, CENTRAL VISAYAS, NORTHERN MINDANAO, AND DAVAO. HE HAD THE FOLLOWING TO SAY ABOUT THE SITUATION IN EACH OF THOSE REGIONS:

(A) METRO-MANILA: THE OPPOSITION LABAN PARTY WILL PROBABLY WIN 10 OR EVEN 11 SEATS (AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY).

(B) THE BICOL (YANEZA'S HOME REGION): INFORMATION SECRETARY TATAD'S WELL-OILED CANDIDACY HAS ANGEJED THE TRADITIONAL POLITICANS, AND THE LATTER ARE NOT CAMPAIGNING HARD FOR THE KBL. THE OPPOSITION "YOUNG PHILIPPINES" PARTY MAY WELL BE ABLE TO PICK UP THE PIECES.

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PAGE 01 MANILA 04155 02 OF 02 150848Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MANILA 4155

(C) CENTRAL VISAYAS: CEBU VOTERS ARE JUST ORNERY ENOUGH, HE SAID, TO GIVE THE MODERATE OPPOSITION "PUSYON BISAYA" PARTY A CLEAN SWEEP. YANEZA CONFIRMED THAT COMELEC COMMISSIONER CASIMIRO MADARANG IS SPONSORING THE PUSYON PARTY, SINCE HE WILL RETIRE FROM THE COMELEC IN MAY AND HOPES TO RUN IN THE LOCAL ELECTIONS. AF OPPOSITION VICTORY IN CEBU, YANEZA SAID, DISTURBS THE GOVERNMENT BECAUSE IT WILL ENCOURAGE THE DOMINANT VISAYAN EMIGRANT POPULATION IN MINDANAO TO VOTE OPPOSITION IN FUTURE ELECTIONS. MARCOS, HE SAID, HAD WANTED TO CAMPAIGN PERSONALLY IN THE BICOL AND CEBU TB CONTAIN KBL LOSSES; BUT YANEZA PERSUADED HIM THESE ARE LOCAL SQUABBLES WHICH HE COULD NOT RESOLVE AND THEREFORE SHOULD NOT RISK HIS PRESTIGE OVER. INSTEAD, YANEZA, WHO HAS REPLACED MADARANG AS COMELEC'S CEBU-WATCHER, WILL TRAVEL TO CEBU LATE THIS WEEK. HE NOTED THAT LITO OSMENA (NEPHEW OF MARCOS' EXILED 1969 PRESIDENTIAL OPPONENT) IS CAMPAIGNING THE HARDEST AMONG THE REGION'S KBL CANDIDATES, WHILE THE OTHERS' CAMPAIGNS ARE LACKLUSTER.

(D) NORTHERN MINDANAO: KBL LEADER EX-VICE-PRESIDENT EMMANUEL PELAEZ IS HAVING DIFFICULTY ATTRACTING CROWDS, YANEZA SAID. ON THE OTHER HAND, OPPOSITION MINDANAO ALLIANCE PARTY FRONT-RUNNER RUBEN CANOY (EX-MAYOR OF CAGAYAN DE ORO AND FORMER INFORMATION UNDERSECRETARY) IS A SKILLED AN POPULAR POLITICAL INFIGHTER WHO KNOWS WHERE GOVERNMENT
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PAGE 02 MANILA 04155 02 OF 02 150848Z

SKELETONS ARE BURIED.

(E) DAVAO: REGION XI, YANEZA SAID, ACTUALLY VOTED 40 PERCENT "NO" IN THE DECEMBER REFERENDUM (OFFICIAL RESULTS SHOWED A 77 PERCENT "YES" VOTE THERE); THIS WAS DONE* HE SAID, WITH NO ALTERNATIVE OFFERED. EVEN A FIVE PERCENT SWING TO THE OPPOSITION NOW, HE SAID, COULD DEFEAT THE KBL COMPLETELY. AT THE SAME TIME, THE KBL IS SERIOUSLY SPLIT

BY A POWER STRUGGLE BETWEEN NATIONAL VICE CHAIRMAN FOR
DAVAO TONY FLORENDO AND LEADING CANDIDATE EX-SENATOR
ALEJANDRO ALMENDRAS.

6. COMMENTING ON MARCOS' MARCH 10 STATEMENT THAT MRS. MARCOS
WOULD HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN REMAINING METRO-MANILA GOVERNOR
AND JOINING THE IBP, YANEZA SAID THERE WOULD SHORTLY BE
A PLEBISCITE TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW HEJ TO
TAKE BOTH JOBS. HE CITED A PRECEDENT IN THE FRENCH CON-
STITUTION AND SAID THERE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM DOING THIS.

7. YANEZA SAID HE HAD RECENTLY DISCUSSED ALLEGED AMERICAN
"MEDDLING" WITH MARCOS. YANEZA ASSURED MARCOS THE U.S. SEEMED
INTERESTED ONLY IN MONITORING THE ELECTION AND NOT IN ASSISTING
THE OPPOSITION. MARCOS SEEMED TO ACCEPT THIS EXPLANATION,
HE SAID. HE ASKED EMBOFF TO CONFIRM THIS WAS TRUE, AND
EMBOFF DID SO.
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